MR. POILU

NOTES AND SKETCHES
WITH THE FIGHTING
FRENCH

By HERBERT WARD

MR. POILU

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

FIVE YEARS WITH THE CONGO CANNIBALS

MY LIFE WITH STANLEY'S REAR-GUARD

A VOICE FROM THE CONGO

A Sentry

MR. POILU

NOTES AND SKETCHES WITH THE FIGHTING FRENCH

BY

HERBERT WARD

CHEVALIER DE LA LÉGION D'HONNEUR

CROIX DE GUERRE

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

MCMXVI

'Le Poilu, c'est toi, c'est nous, ce sont tous les gars aux rudes cœurs et aux vaillants visages qui se hérissent des Vosges à la Mer du Nord et tiennent tête aux Barbares, en attendant le succès final.'

(Le Poilu,
Journal des tranchées de Champagne.)

TO

LORD NORTHCLIFFE

London, *October* 1916.

My dear Alfred,—I ask you to accept the dedication of this little volume of notes and sketches, not only as a happy remembrance of our lifelong friendship, but also in recognition of your eminently successful efforts, during many years, to cement the friendly understanding of our country with the great nation of France.

As you know, it has been my privilege to reside and to work in France during the last fifteen years—to have lived with the French in peace time and to have served them in war time. With such opportunity as a basis for my impressions, I welcome this occasion to record my whole-hearted tribute to the sterling character of the men and women of France. It is not alone an appreciation of their spirit, their courage and loyal devotion, for these qualities have been so abundantly confirmed in this war, and are well recognised traditions of their race; I would go further than this—I venture to express my respect and admiration for the French people of all classes.

Knowing how keenly you feel the great advantages of increasing the understanding of the two great nations, I am both proud and grateful to have this opportunity of telling you of my admiration for all you have done and are doing, to bring about a closer union between the French and English nations for the betterment of the human race. Yours always,

HERBERT.

INTRODUCTION

The Publishers have given me the opportunity of reading, before publication, the text of this volume, and of seeing both the originals and the reproductions of the illustrations. This with the request that I provide an Introduction. At the outset it seems fair to state that the book as written and pictured is entirely the work of an old and dear friend —my schoolfellow of forty years ago. Obviously, in anything I say, such fact has its advantages and disadvantages. Certainly there are difficulties, for I write as a friend, not as an expert either in art or letters, and claim due indulgence for my inexperience. But to me the skill and beauty of this record seem insistent and undeniable. The notes and sketches may be called fragments, but they are more real, more instinct with life, than highly finished and elaborated efforts. It is true, however, that only the two last years of the author's work and life come within the scope of the following pages, and it is for this reason that I am urged to give some sketch of earlier years—years full of purpose, of high adventure and valued achievement.

Herbert Ward was born in London on the 11th of January 1863. In the year 1876 he came to Mill Hill, where I had been for two years at school. I am writing therefore after that period of *Forty Years On*, made classic

by the Harrow School song. Remembrance, sharing with one's later knowledge after so many years, may well play tricks with exactitude, but some scanty impressions remain, vivid and clear.

In my mind's eye I recall a well-knit figure, with unusually deep chest and broad shoulders, deep-set blue eyes wide apart, and a remoteness, almost shyness, of manner bespeaking a reticence not perhaps in accord with the accepted convention of public school life. Anyhow, he was individual, and so to a few of us interesting. A rebel, as I now realise, against the accepted and rigid mould of the day, with visions of a wider world of travel and adventure than the study of maps in stuffy classrooms could afford. He left school too early to make any special mark of distinction, left with little record or promise to indicate the variety and success of his future career. I have a distinct recollection of his skill in the Gymnasium, where he was a prime favourite with our Instructor, and showed early signs of that strength and adaptability which have proved so useful in his strenuous life. Circumstance or he himself decided that before he was sixteen years old (in 1878) he should face a wider world. This is no place or opportunity to give in detail the many happenings of an experience teeming with incident and interest; I can only give in the barest outline the facts. Ward sailed in an emigrant ship, the *James Wishart*, a 700 ton barque, for Auckland, New Zealand, a tougher discipline than even the uncongenial school life. For the three following years he graduated in a university of struggle and hardship

in various parts of New Zealand and Australia, being in turn sailor, kauri-gum digger, coal and gold miner, sail-maker, gymnast in a travelling circus, and stock-rider. Wishing to return to England, and not having any more attractive opportunity, he shipped as an A.B. before the mast in the full-rigged ship *The Star of the Sea* from Sydney to San Francisco, and round Cape Horn to London. The call of the sea was irresistible, and after a short stay he made two further voyages, one to New York in *The Persian Monarch*, a ship carrying Scandinavian emigrants, and again to Singapore. This last voyage was with the definite object of seeking adventure and experience in Borneo, where, through the interest of the Governor of the North Borneo Company, he was enrolled as a cadet in the service. This gave him the wider scope for which his abilities were fitted. He was sent on an important expedition of some hundreds of miles up the Kinabatangan River to an outpost at Penungah, among picturesque but uncertain natives. Here, for eight months, by tact and a sympathetic understanding with the natives, he did valuable work, until a severe attack of jungle fever laid him low. After a few months of convalescence in England, in the autumn of 1884 Ward went to the Congo under the auspices of Sir Henry M. Stanley. Here he was commissioned to assist in the organisation of transport service, going far into the interior to found stations and persuade the various chiefs to lend their able-bodied men as carriers. Varied active service in what is now the Congo Free State lasted for two and a half years, when the news reached him of Stanley's

arrival in command of the Expedition to relieve Emin Pasha in the Sudan. On his own initiative Herbert Ward collected a force of over four hundred natives as carriers, and marched down country with them to meet Stanley, placing his and their services at the great explorer's disposal. His offer was accepted, and he was enrolled as an officer (voluntary) of the Expedition, and a further two and a half years of unceasing and exciting work were passed in the centre of the Dark Continent. Much literature exists very fully detailing this period, including three books by Ward himself, *Five Years with the Congo Cannibals*, *My Life with Stanley's Rear-Guard*, and *A Voice from the Congo*, all of which obtained wide recognition. In 1890 Herbert Ward married, in America, Sarita, daughter of C. H. Sanford of New York, and settled for ten years in England. His interest and work in sculpture called him, in 1900, to Paris, and there he migrated with his family of five children, alternating between the busy studio and home life of the city, and a beautiful country home at Rolleboise on the Seine, forty miles from Paris.

The years between 1900 and the outbreak of the present war were full of fine work in sculpture, mainly concerned with the presentation of the Central African life he has always loved so well. A constant exhibitor at the Salon, where he was awarded two gold medals, he was further honoured by specimens of his work being acquired for the Luxembourg, and in 1911 he received the Cross of the Legion of Honour.

The outbreak of war made it necessary to return to

England, though the family's departure was unduly delayed, and it was not until 1st September 1914, when the outposts of the German Army were within a few miles of the house, that he, his wife and two sons left Rolleboise in a motor-car driven by the second son, Herbert, an Eton boy of sixteen. They arrived safely in England from La Rochelle, by a ship from South America. As to so many homes, the war has brought to his immediate circle, after many bright years of happy family life, the sad sorrow but splendid sacrifice of death. The eldest son, Charles Sanford Ward, was just of age. After a distinguished school life at Eton he had been for two years at Christchurch, Oxford, where he followed up his success in winning the Public School Boxing Competition by representing his University, whilst still an undergraduate, against Cambridge, again successfully. He was on vacation at Rolleboise on that fatal 4th of August, and hurried to England, joining the 10th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. He was killed in front of Neuve Chapelle on the night of the 7th January 1916, when, on reconnoitring duty, within thirty yards of the German trenches. He is buried on the enemy side of the lines, and leaves the memory of a character and personality as gentle and kindly as it was strong and gallant, '*sans peur et sans reproche*.'

The second son, Herbert Sanford Ward, joined the Royal Flying Corps on leaving Eton, and was badly wounded in an aerial duel. He was shot down over the enemy lines and taken prisoner. After five months of captivity in hospital

and prison camps, with great pluck and ingenuity he escaped into Switzerland, and is now in England working at one of the principal flying centres.

This interpolation will not, it is hoped, be considered out of place—so much of the qualities of the sons seems to me to represent the characteristics of their father: simplicity, directness of aim, the love of adventure, with a restraint and modesty in the doing of what life presents.

And it is in this same war that the father too has served. He has shown once more the fallacy of the 'Too old at forty' legend. Having lent and equipped the house at Rolleboise, with its beautiful gardens sloping down to the Seine, to one of the branches of the Red Cross, and engaged an English doctor and nurses, Ward completed the arrangements for its working, and shortly afterwards became attached as Lieutenant to the famous No. 3 Convoy of the British Ambulance Committee. This Convoy, under the command of Captain Percy Tarbutt, operated under the French Army at Gérardmer, and some indication of the valuable and heroic work done by this devoted section in succouring the French wounded may be gathered from the author's pages. I have heard from his comrades and fellow-officers, especially Captain Tarbutt and Walter Buckmaster, how greatly they were cheered by Ward's unflagging helpfulness and companionship during those months of constant struggle in their work for the wounded. A serious injury sustained at the front after six months of devoted service in the Vosges compelled Lieutenant Herbert Ward to return to Paris for surgical treatment. He was

mentioned in despatches,[1] and decorated with the 'Croix de Guerre.' All he had seen during those hard long days and nights of the sufferings and bravery of the gallant French soldiers compelled him, though unable to rejoin the firing line, still to work for the better relief of the stricken on the battlefield. In February of the present year he sailed from Bordeaux to New York, carrying warm credentials from M. Hanotaux. Lecturing to large and influential audiences in the principal centres from New York to the Pacific, his knowledge and experience of the French nation and the French soldier brought a mass of new information, and threw a much-needed light on the facts and conditions of the situation. As a result he secured generous response everywhere, and raised many thousands of pounds, wisely and well used by the American War Relief Clearing House in Paris. On his return to England, further lectures in London and the more important provincial towns resulted in very large additional funds being raised, the whole amount being given to the French Red Cross at Knightsbridge, so admirably administered by Mr. D. H. Illingworth. And now, during these last few months, with ceaseless anxiety to help the cause of the Allies, he has written this book; all profits accruing to

[1] MENTION IN DESPATCHES OF THE 27TH ARMY
OCTOBER 22ND, 1915.

WARD, HERBERT:

'HAS shown on many occasions conduct prompted by feelings of devotion and generosity. Although injured whilst on service, he resumed his duties before being cured. Distinguished himself by ensuring the removal of the wounded whilst the road was being bombarded.'

Signed: G. DE POUYDRAGUIN,
General commanding the 47th Army.

him are to go to the same service of the wounded, or for the mourning families of the dead.

This slight sketch, then, of my friend, inadequate as it is, needs, I am bold enough to think, no justification. His record stands, and will stand, as showing that whilst the youth of Great Britain has lived and died with a splendour of conduct and heroism unequalled in history, the older generation has not failed in the high purposes of duty, or in loyalty to the ideals of freedom, bred in our race.

Much of Herbert Ward is revealed in his pages—much, but not all—for to those of us who know him and have known him most intimately, he stands as representative of that happy phrase, 'A genius for friendship'; and with my own special reasons for remembrance and affectionate appreciation of this quality, I am grateful for the occasion offered me to introduce this volume.

SYDNEY S. PAWLING.

London,
November 1916.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

PAGE

MR. POILU 1

CHAPTER II

WITH THE BLUE DEVILS (CHASSEURS ALPINS) . . . 19

CHAPTER III

S. S. A.—CONVOY No. 3 (SECTION SANITAIRE ANGLAISE) . 94

CHAPTER IV

BEHIND THE CURTAIN 121

CHAPTER V

THE WOMEN OF FRANCE 139

ILLUSTRATIONS

A Sentry	*Frontispiece*
	PAGE
Bombs	3
'A Blue Devil'	7
A *Poilu*	11
Winter in the Vosges	15
A French Infantryman—1915	17
A French Soldier	21
Le Général de Division	23
A *Poste de Secours*	27
A Typical 'Blue Devil'	29
Letters from Home	33
'. . . the Extreme Misery of their Surroundings'	35
The Explosion of a Big Shell	39
The Lingekopf	43
A *Planton*	47
A Chasseur Alpin	49
A Sniper	53
'. . . in a Trench at Dawn . . .'	55
An Operation, Underground	59
An Exploding Shell	63
An Unfinished Sketch under Shell-Fire	65
A Chasseur Alpin Muleteer	69
An '*Abri*'	71

PAGE

A *Cagna* 73

A Soldiers' Cemetery in the Forest—Vosges . . 77

Sulzern—Midnight: October 1915 81

'. . . Wooden Crosses in the Trenches to mark the Spot where a Man has fallen 85

In the Trenches at Tête des Faux . . . fifteen yards from the Enemy 89

Watching the Mascot 91

A Sketch near Luneville 95

A French Soldier from the Jura 99

'Sniper's Corner' 103

A Type of French Soldier: a Veteran . . . 107

A '*Fantassin*' (Infantry) 111

'Our Work . . . at Night . . . under Shell and Rifle Fire 115

Under Shell-Fire 119

Wounded! 123

After an Explosion 127

'No Man's Land'—Wettstein: October 1915 . . 131

Winter 133

'. . . the two White-clad Figures . . .' . . . 137

A French *Réserviste* 141

A French Soldier Type 145

Reconnoitring, behind a Snow Bank 149

Mud! 153

The Grave of a French Soldier 155

CHAPTER I

MR. POILU

THE word *Poil*,[1] in French military slang, conveys about the same meaning as our good English word *pluck*. It stands for courage, energy, and in fact all other manly attributes; hence, we trace a sequence of appropriate suggestions in the evolution of the word *Poilu* — the honourable nickname of the French soldier.

Our friend and comrade Mr. Poilu has all the qualities we most appreciate. He is a merry soul; he has a nimble mind and a gaiety of spirit which never seems to fail. He is brimful of kindness and unselfishness. His emotions are easily touched; but his tears are never shed except in sympathy for others. In adversity, he generally smiles; in the moment of the worst danger he will often utter a jest which brings forth instant peals of laughter from his comrades; then, when face to face with death, his last words are of his mother and of his country.

The typical Mr. Poilu has always a sparkle in his eye, a ruddy glow of health in his cheeks, and a general expression of bright, quick intelligence and good humour. There is apt to be a certain hardness and determination

[1] '*Il a du poil*' = He's a plucky chap.

suggested by the lines around his mouth. He is invariably polite; one may truthfully say that the average French soldier has not alone the manner, but the instincts of a gentleman.

The Poilu who has tasted the intensity of life, and has faced death in the trenches, impresses me by his natural sense of philosophy. He cherishes a deep affection for his comrades; he has, sadly enough, bade farewell for ever to his folks at home; he has passed through that first great ordeal of fear, and is resigned to whatever may happen.

He feels proud of being a soldier; he is convinced beyond all argument that he is fighting in *La Guerre du Droit*. Fatalist he may be, but inasmuch as he surely believes that he himself will be killed, he is equally positive that France will be victorious.

Conversing with men in the trenches, I heard a never-ending abuse of the boches: that as enemies they were crafty and mean, that their cruel devilish acts would never be forgotten, that they were men with bad *hearts*, gross and common, that they were worse, far worse than savages, and that they were in fact the very scum of the earth and past redemption. Such wholesale condemnation of the enemy was justly based on solid foundations,

Bombs

for the French soldiers had all personally experienced so many aspects of the German's ignoble warfare; yet those gallant Frenchmen never failed to pay a tribute to the physical courage of the enemy. The admission, which is perhaps a more suitable word, was generally qualified by the expressive terminal: '. . . *les cochons*.'

My conversations with Mr. Poilu always seemed to end in the same way. Accompanying the parting handshake, he invariably used the same expression, '*Nous les aurons*,' sometimes varied into '*On les aura, coûte qui coûte*.' These words, spoken with a significant nod of the head, were uttered in a tone of such certainty and determination that one's heart responded instantly in confirmation of their truth.

The Poilu of to-day is the Frenchman of yesterday. His physique has been improved by exercises such as boxing and football: he has found profit in training, and has recognised and welcomed the sensations and advantages of being fit. The European boxing champion, Carpentier, has proved a good model for the younger men; he is the perfect example of what force of will, steady training, and true sportsmanlike qualities can accomplish.

The devotion of the men to their officers, and the brotherly comradeship of all ranks are distinguishing features of the French army. I have known of many

instances where the attachment was so strong that men have chosen to refuse the six days' leave accorded to French soldiers of all ranks, because they feared that at the end of their leave they might be drafted to some other unit.

A similar spirit is shown in the manner in which orders are obeyed. The officers are in close human contact with their men, and the men instinctively understand and instinctively realise the necessity of their orders. The giving and obeying of orders is governed far more by the heart than by the sense of discipline.

I made particular note of the fact that every French soldier I talked with had a settled conviction that he would die in battle sooner or later, but his positive fatalism in no way impaired his keenness to fight, nor did it in any way suppress his exuberant spirits.

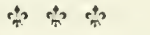
The French army is first and last utilitarian ; it exists exclusively for the purpose of war. It is a democratic national army, without any hindrances of class distinction.

The French army is based upon a human system. It reminds one of a family wherein the father ranks as the general, the elder brothers as officers, and the rest of the children are the soldiers. My reason for comparing the system of the French army with that of family life is the sympathetic understanding which exists among French soldiers of all ranks. One never sees any signs

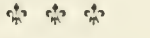
'A Blue Devil'

Chasseurs Alpins Corps (with Steel Helmet and Infantry Overcoat)

of swaggering or haughty bearing among the officers. There is no arrogance: everywhere there is simple equality. I feel that I am on safe ground when I affirm that the tenacity and patience of the French army, those very qualities that have gained the admiration of the whole world, are largely due to this paternal system. It is a system that is peculiarly adapted to the French temperament; it is in harmony with their intelligence, their love of liberty, and their high state of civilisation.



In describing Mr. Poilu as I know him, I feel that he would wish me to add an appreciative reference to his parents, who, by the way, are also my good friends. I know instinctively that Mr. Poilu would tell me to put it upon record that whatever reputation he has gained in the war is due to the care and devotion of his worthy mother and father, and it is more than likely that he would want me to bring in an allusion to an aunt or uncle who may have formed part of the family circle. He would ask me to write about the loving care that was bestowed upon him from his birth, an incident which, unknown to himself, may have heralded the complete union of family affection. He would surely tell me that his mother was the sweetest and cleverest and most devoted mother in France.



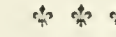
Mr. Poilu is a sportsman.

At Gérardmer, where we were billeted, we organised football matches between our English Ambulance Convoy, No. 3, and the French soldiers. The French teams were composed of men who were able to obtain leave, and they included officers and men. One incident alone will serve to support Mr. Poilu's reputation as a sportsman. A soldier with a good record was allowed to come from the trenches; he left them at 3.30 A.M., tramped all day over the mountains, arriving on the ground at 2 P.M., just in time to play in the match. Immediately the game was over he started to tramp back to his trenches, a good ten hours' journey. He was a private in the 'Blue Devil Corps.'

In Alsace last year, close to our quarters, there occurred an incident which indicates clearly enough the French soldier's temperament. Two Chasseurs Alpins were witnesses of the peculiarly revolting treatment of the body of one of their comrades, by the enemy. Both men solemnly vowed that when an occasion offered, they would give similar treatment to the first German they found. Some days later they discovered two Germans lying hidden in the ashes of a burnt-out hayrick. They pounced upon them; then they exchanged a glance which was understood to mean that the opportunity was at hand for the fulfilment of their vow. Finding, however, that both Germans were wounded, they first gave them a

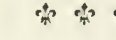
A *Poilu*

drink from their water-bottles and then carried them both back to their lines for medical treatment.



Walking along a forest path which led to a region of concealed batteries, I stepped aside as a platoon marched past. Just where I stood were the freshly-made graves of several men who had recently fallen. Wooden crosses had been erected upon each grave, bearing the fallen man's name and number.

A sound of pain—half gasp, half groan—startled me. It had escaped the lips of one of the soldiers who had turned his head in my direction, and who had read, on one of the wooden crosses, the name of his brother. Without breaking his step, he merely bowed his head and plodded steadily forward with his comrades, and was soon lost to view. This incident only covered the space of a couple of minutes, yet it furnished enough anguish and tragedy to engrave itself deeply among the memories of a lifetime.



The better understanding of the French by the English dates from the commencement of this war. So many English people have been misled into thinking that Paris, with its holiday air of freedom and frivolity, is typical of French life. As a fact, Paris is the least typical of French cities. Paris is just—Paris: in a measure supported and patronised by foreigners of all types and

descriptions, who are attracted periodically to the centre of art and fashion.

The French are simple people; well educated, refined, and without a particle of servility or grossness. They enjoy simple and natural pleasures, and they cannot understand any real enjoyment being derived from the mere spending of money. They are brilliantly witty, naturally intellectual, and their beautiful language is rightly regarded with national pride.

With the French there is a distinctly religious quality about their devotion to their country: a quality which underlies the sentiment of patriotism. It is love of country pure and simple, love of the ground of France.[1] The effect of this whole-hearted religious devotion is extremely elevating, and touches a far higher chord than the immediate hatred of the enemy. How many a dying Poilu has exclaimed :—

'Qu'importe la Mort, puisque c'est pour la France?'

[1] *Chant des Girondins*: 1783 :—

'Mourir pour la Patrie,
C'est le sort le plus beau,
Le plus digne d'envie.'

Winter in the Vosges

A French Infantryman—1915

CHAPTER II

WITH THE BLUE DEVILS

(CHASSEURS ALPINS)

My personal memories and impressions of the war are chiefly governed by the quality of dramatic contrast. Everywhere, I witnessed an ever-changing human drama. I felt conscious of a power which drew my heart in two opposite directions; at one time weighing it down in impotent sympathy with all the dark horrors of suffering and death; at another time uplifting it in raptures of vital admiration for man's courage and woman's noble devotion.

This quality of contrast extended even to natural surroundings. More than once I have listened to the singing of birds and the tinkling of village church bells, joyous music of peace, accompanied by the low rumbling of death-dealing heavy guns, the discordance of cruel war. I have watched cows quietly grazing in meadows which were bathed in glorious sunshine, whilst the horizon was quite hidden in the black smoke of burning villages and the earth literally trembled under the explosion of monster shells. After a long night's work in the dark, among wounded and dying men,

with my hands and clothes bearing signs of their ebbing life's blood, I have passed the early morning hours amid the ruins of village homes, and even there I have found the compensating contrast, for were there not certain branches of some humble creeping plant spreading timidly forward, as though seeking to conceal in their embrace the poor charred fragments that remained of a former happy home?

All is in violent contrast. There is the brutal instinct of cruelty alongside the sweet gentleness of mercy; the rugged dirty face married to the cleanest of hearts; life and laughter followed the next moment by—death.

In continuing to narrate instances where the exaggerated qualities of light and shade produce effects which baffle description, I must not omit to mention the hospital-theatre in a small Alsatian town, within twenty miles of Gérardmer. Imagine the local theatre transformed from a playhouse, with all its gaudy accessories, into an improvised hospital for the reception of wounded. At the time of my visiting the place, the front line of trenches was within a distance of two miles, and a continual supply of wounded men was received at all hours by the eminent and indefatigable Dr. Capmas. By night, the scene within the theatre was extremely dramatic. The stage was lit by an oil hurricane-lamp tied to a portion of the scenic canvas.

A French Soldier

Le Général de Division
Commanding Chasseurs Alpins

In the centre of the stage was an operating table, consisting of a few planks resting on trestles; the surgeon in a discoloured blouse worked by the light of a candle, held by an unkempt *brancardier*. Around the sides of the stage lay a heterogeneous collection of rifles, knapsacks, and surgical appliances, whilst blood-stained stretchers were propped against the flimsy canvas representations of sylvan scenes. The floor of the theatre, from which the seats and benches had been removed, was entirely occupied by rows of wounded men lying upon stretchers, awaiting their turn to be carried on to the stage for operation. I can still recall the smell of sodden clothing and the pungent odour of iodoform and chloroform. I can still hear that difficult and vain gasp for breath of men who had been under the influence of those detestable asphyxiating gases initiated by the enemy: the painful struggle to inhale air into lungs which had lost their elasticity; the involuntary groans of men with shattered mangled bodies; the occasional piercing cries of those who, in their disturbed slumber—the slumber that comes as a result of utter fatigue and overstrained nerves—are haunted by dreams of vague horror; the clattering of heavy boots on bare boards; the sharp click of the surgical instruments—all to the accompaniment of the booming of heavy guns which made the windows rattle and shook the building.

The Chasseurs Alpins Corps to whom our convoy was attached are popularly known as ' The Blue Devils.' The Devil part of their nickname is in flattering allusion to their valour ; the adjective refers to the dark blue colour of their uniforms. They display an almost religious observance in the fulfilment of their vow, indicated by the motto of their corps, ' Never to be taken alive.' The corps is recruited from the mountain country of France ; the men are remarkable for their sturdy physique (they are mostly men of medium height) and for their tenacious courage. They are accustomed to hardship and fatigue, they live on simple fare and by tradition are deeply imbued with antagonism to the Germans. They are silent men. Their square-set faces seem to speak of successful struggle against the mighty forces of mountain dangers ; their strong backs and their frank manners harmonise well with the brave deeds for which they are world famous.

A *Poste de Secours*

A Typical 'Blue Devil'

Chasseurs Alpins

Bound eastwards on a special mission in April of last year, we lost a tyre near a little ruined village. Whilst waiting for the car, I stumbled about the heaps of cinders and wreckage, trying to find some subject for my sketch-book. The place was utterly sacked and destroyed; in fact there was not more than six or seven feet of any wall left standing. Suddenly in front of me, in the midst of the ruins, there appeared the figure of a little old man, with a ragged beard, and very dirty face. He had crawled out of a cellar by a ladder, and in view of the utter solitude of the place, his sudden appearance was certainly startling. He told me that he was out of luck. Kicking off his *sabot*, he showed me an injured foot, twisted and misshapen.

'This,' he said, 'happened to me in the war of '70.' Then pulling up his trouser leg, he showed me his badly-burned leg, which was in a distressing condition and badly in need of treatment.

'This,' he said, 'happened to me in this war; truly I have no luck and yet'—he paused for a moment,—'perhaps it might be worse, because over against that wall there, the German soldiers ordered me to stand with several of my old companions, and then prepared to shoot us. I don't know why they were going to kill us, I suppose they had their German reasons. The officer stood just over there, and he was looking through his glasses to see, I suppose, when the French were coming back. Then a shell exploded just about here, and it killed him. You can still see his blood on those bricks

there—so he never gave the order to fire! Some of the soldiers, too, were wounded by that shell. Then that night the French came back and drove the Germans away.'

At that moment there appeared another apparition, an old woman, his wife. She climbed up the ladder with difficulty, eyed me with a sharp glance, and then continued her husband's story :—

'Think then,' said she, 'a letter came from Germany, from the woman who was the wife of the officer. The letter was sent to our Mayor. I have seen it. That woman in Germany wrote and said she wanted the body of her husband to be carefully buried in a place where she could come and get it after the war. Think then of that,' she said again, raising her shaking hands in a gesture that reminded me of the Witches of Macbeth.

Her thin grey hair hung in wisps over her dirty face, a face lined with a lifetime of toil; and at the moment she told me about the letter, I was startled by her demoniacal expression. Her hands, with long curled nails, seemed like claws. Her face was a symbol of fury.

Last year in April, with Paul Gérard and Arthur Price, my two companions on our *Mission Speciale*, we accompanied the *Médecin Divisionaire*, Dr. Thooris, over a considerable portion of the first and second line trenches of the Vosges front. There was deep snow, and conditions were particularly hard, especially for the wounded,

Letters from Home

'. . . the extreme misery of their surroundings'

who had to be drawn to the rear on sledges. In these miserable trenches in the vicinity of the Hohnek, we talked with men who had already passed many months without a break in the same trenches. As a special privilege, the Colonel had allowed them to remain, in recognition of their gallant conduct. Several of them explained that they much preferred to remain there with their comrades, because if they accepted a few days' leave they were afraid they might miss something. I was impressed everywhere by their extraordinary cheeriness amid the extreme misery of their surroundings.

We dined one night in the forest, at a *Poste de Secours*—a Field Hospital, composed of roughly constructed and temporary sheds—with Dr. Montalti, a surgeon of great ability. During the meal we were deafened by a battery of French '75's' which fired just above our heads; enemy shells landed in our vicinity, and two or three times during the meal Montalti was called away to operate. We left the simple little shelter late at night, in pitch darkness, to follow a mountain path used by ammunition mules. The mud was often above our knees, so progress was difficult and slow. By the time we reached the next *Poste*, we learnt by telephone that a shell had fallen on one of Montalti's forest shelters, killing four men and wounding several others.

Extracts from my Diary.

29.9.'15. 11.30 P.M.

At last I have reached this famous place ' W ' ; famous it is indeed, for it has been the scene of much hard fighting.

It 's nearly midnight, shells are pouring into us without any deeent intervals. A horrible night, and my motor journey up here from Gérardmer was no ' joy ride.' All the way it poured incessantly, making the darkness darker. We, of coursc, were without lights, and we bumped pretty often into men on the road, and I am afraid we bruised a good many mules of an ammunition transport convoy. We came in my own car, with two French officers—four long hours in the cold and wet, with shells continually screaming overhead and occasionally dropping around us. Utterly cheerless it is. The mud is nearly knee-deep ; sticky stuff, too.

During the last three hours we floundered about in the dark, loading wounded men into each ambulance as it arrived. Thc poor chaps were lying about on their stretchers in the mud—out in the pouring rain. Many of them had lain there for hours, and they were, of course, all thoroughly drenched. Now and then we could see quite clearly by the light of shells exploding near by—a dismal and forlorn picture it made. What suffering ! Ugh ! A big shell has just exploded pretty close by—the ground is still shaking.

It 's very cold. I 'm a guest of the surgeons in the *Poste de Seeours*—we arc within three hundred and fifty

The Explosion of a Big Shell

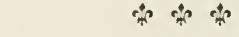
yards of the Germans. The doctors are busy operating all the time in little underground 'dug-outs.' I hear only the sounds of groaning and the wicked shell music.

30.9.'15. 11 A.M.

My hands have been too cold to hold a pencil. What a night! This is no place for any one at all inclined to be fussy. Heavy rain all night, and vicious artillery fire. Several times I thought they had found us; they were certainly very 'warm.' No sleep to speak of. At dawn I had a strange surprise. They gave me the choice of being above or below ground, and I chose the hut in preference to the cellar. I thought I would keep above ground as long as I could. It was quite a poor little shanty, hastily knocked together with pieces of packing-cases, and the roof covered, except in places, with tarred felt. While it was still raining, I heard a queer tinkling jingle just outside the open window. I stuck my head out, and found I was face to face with a real Poilu; he was standing, in the rain, strumming tunes upon an old cracked piano. They had just brought it up on the back of a mule from a ruined villa down in the valley. Although it rained hard and the enemy's rifle fire was quite brisk, the soldier, with a cheery, roguish smile on his dirty face, played and sang a popular little song. It was evidently a very well-known air, because the refrain

was taken up by all hands, hundreds of men digging dug-outs and many more doing underground work. How typical! how human! The sound of heavy rain, the whistling of shells overhead, for we happened to be just between two batteries, the thud of picks and shovels, the metallic and intermittent tinkle of what was once a proud piano, and those voices—such cheery sympathetic voices—raised in exuberant song even at the first hour of dawn.

It was weird this morning when daylight came. On all sides were piles of red earth and fragments of rocks—wreckage everywhere; all the pine trees of what was once a forest-clad hilltop are reduced to stumps and splinters. Here and there one could just detect a thin column of blue smoke, suggestive of early morning coffee in an underground refuge. The question of getting a wash was soon settled; there were many rain puddles. The view is exceedingly fine, and one can trace the trenches for many miles among the mountains on three sides. The gaiety of all the men is remarkable. Every man wears a cheery face, and there 's just a subtle something in their manner that tells of the conscious pride they feel in facing danger and death.



I have just been out with the *Médecin chef*. From certain carefully-chosen covers we had a good look at the German lines about four hundred yards away. There was really nothing much to be seen except the scarred ground

The Lingekopf

The Forest razed by Shell-fire ; a Communication Trench in the foreground

cut in zig-zag gashes, and sometimes forming the pattern of the letter H.

We crawled about cautiously among rocks and tree-stumps until we reached a place where there had been a night attack. It was raining steadily, and the heavy clay ground was in a horrible condition. Stretcher-bearers with their burdens were sliding and slipping up on the side of the hill. What agony for the poor soaking-wet wounded to be exposed to this bitter cold wind, to be jostled and bumped; many of them with fractured limbs, too. Oh! the agony of it all. We passed many heaps of broken rifles, the detached barrels bent into curious shapes, and many of the stocks splintered to fragments by bullets. Strangely dramatic I found these heaps of broken weapons; mere wreckage in themselves, but how they make one think! It surely does not require any unusual gift of imagination to feel that in those very piles of distorted fragments is the whole tragic story of human strife: courage, despair and death.

A few minutes ago I passed close to the soldiers' cemetery. It is situated on the slope of a hill—the graves are to be counted in their thousands. In spite of all endeavours to select a peaceful and suitable site for the last resting-place of fallen men, the enemy's shells had desecrated the sacred spot. High explosive shells had

wrecked the graves. Hundreds of the rough little wooden crosses, the work of loyal and affectionate comrades, which bore the fallen soldier's name and marked his place of burial, were literally blown away into match-wood. This is war! Can anything justify war?

It is well past midnight and I am writing under real difficulties. . . . We loaded many ambulances to-night, under rifle fire and still the incessant rain. One poor chap, as he was being carried forward, protested in a weak voice, for he was badly wounded, that he was bitterly cold. The canvas stretcher upon which he lay, already thoroughly soaked, had become watertight, and truly enough the man was cold, for he was lying in a bath of ice-cold water. In tilting the stretcher by the head, quite a quantity of cold water swished out.

A little later I was attracted by the drawn face of another man on a stretcher. He shivered painfully and could not articulate. I lifted the blanket which covered him, it was wringing wet, and found the poor man lying absolutely naked. His clothes had all been blasted off him by an explosive shell.

A *Planton*

A Chasseur Alpin

I was just commencing a little drawing of a soldier this afternoon, when a shell fell about fifty yards from us, killing three men and wounding several others. A small fragment from the exploding shell even left its mark upon my paper. Beyond turning his head for a casual glance, my soldier model remained immovable. I feel bound to admit that it was merely from a sense of shame on my part that I pretended to continue my work.

I 'm writing at a home-made table; there 's a big shell hole through it. My camp stool is continually falling into other holes, with the same origin, in the rough plank floor. The walls on two sides and a portion of the ceiling are plastered with shrapnel; bits of the horrid stuff stick out everywhere. The furniture is a strange mixture of amateur work and pieces of rough design brought up from ruined German farms, for we are here in a strip of country captured from the Germans by the French.

The last ambulance has gone and I am afraid there is barely time for it to get over the twelve or fifteen miles of exposed road before daylight. Numbers of wounded unfortunately are left to wait at least fifteen hours before our cars can venture over the roads again under cover of darkness to come and fetch them. Men who could walk were ordered just now to make the best of their way over the hills towards Lac Noir, some eight miles distant, where our other ambulances could convey them to towns in the valley. They staggered off, these wounded men, in groups of four or five, each man trying to support his neighbour. After covering even a few yards up the hill, a man would fall to the ground from weakness and fatigue, then the others would try and get him on his feet again, even though they themselves were dead beat. Now and then a shell would explode upon the very path in front of them, and the groups, each man either supporting or being supported, would be sharply silhouetted against the flash of light. It was scarcely dawn. Poor chaps!

A Sniper

'. . . in a trench at dawn . . .'

A sketch I once made in a trench at dawn, reminds me that I have seen rugged men, hardened by many months of exposure and peril, watching with appreciative eyes the glorious beauties of daybreak. I know how deeply they are moved by nature's grandeur, because I have had occasion more than once to read the letters of some of these fine French soldiers, written under shell and rifle fire, describing, for instance, in simple picturesque language to their women-folk at home the delicate silvery effects of colour-flooding, which herald the rising of the sun. This profound love of beauty is characteristic of their race, and the soldier inhabiting those living tombs would rather tell of the beauty he has seen in nature than of what he has known of strife and suffering. Here again we meet with that ever-present quality of contrast. Here is a man who at one moment would be capable of calling your attention to the warm tones of the distant snow-clad mountains, and the very next moment would sail in to batter out the brains of his enemy or to give away his own life willingly, without a second thought.

It was in a dark little cavern, an underground dug-out which served as an operating room, that I made the acquaintance of a French surgeon. I remember the dramatic effect of the surroundings; the grouping; the play of light and shade and the weird effect of being below ground while shells were falling overhead, shaking the very earth and causing the surgeon occasionally to stay his hand. He was a black-bearded man with strongly-marked features; the blouse he wore was blood-stained and soiled. A man's figure lay upon the couple of planks which served as an operating table; the operation was grave, not a thing to write about. A rugged soldier whose clothes were caked with red mud stood alongside, holding a candle, and it was by this light alone that the doctor carried on his serious work. Three or four stretcher-bearers were grouped in the corner, waiting to bear the patient away.

A grim sequel was to follow. There came a bad smash up; signs of it were everywhere apparent.

It happened the following day. Among several others, my black-bearded friend was mortally wounded by a bursting shell. Twenty-four hours had passed since my last visit, and, as I came in to see him again, he lay dying on those very planks, in the same dug-out where I had met him the night before. They told me that nineteen doctors had been killed at that *Poste*.

An Operation, Underground

One afternoon I had occasion to visit one of the improvised hospitals. It was the local Casino of Gérardmer ; a quite imposing building with pretentious columns, high ceiling, long windows, and machine-made tapestries on the walls. It was late, and the fading light served to tone down the garishness of the decorations. In the largest room, which in peace time was the happy haunt of gamblers, there were two long rows of neat little iron beds, occupied by grave cases. There were many diverse types of faces, framed by white pillows, and sad eyes met one's glance on every side. The fluted columns and the vulgar mirrors served to increase the air of sadness pervading the place.

At the bedside of a mere lad sat a widow, her black garments appearing strangely prominent amidst the white surroundings. The boy was delirious, and babbled incoherently, whilst the poor lady sat immovable, gazing upon his flushed face. The story was sad indeed. She was in mourning for her husband and two sons, all of whom had already fallen in the war. Here she was sitting at the bedside of her third son, whose leg had been amputated the previous day, and whose life was fast ebbing away.

Two days later, I was present when this brave mother came to bid adieu to the nurse at the hospital, Mademoiselle O. de Johannis. Her son was dead.

I overheard her graceful words of thanks for what had been done, and after a kindly handshake, I watched her pathetic figure, all in black, passing down the aisle

between the beds with gentle dignity, until she reached the empty bed upon which her son had died. There, for a moment, she stopped, gazing at the spot where her last hope had passed away.

About the middle of last year I found myself with half a dozen comrades camped in a shell-swept forest in Alsace in the midst of a number of French batteries. It was a busy time just then because the French were attacking, and we came in for a new series of experiences. Owing to the bombardment of the main road, we were practically cut off from communication with our base. We pitched my old green canvas, 10×12, tent—which revived many vivid memories of my life in Central Africa—on the hillside among ghostly tree trunks, close to a *Poste de Secours*. All my companions were men of the right stamp, and I may say that we succeeded in justifying our presence by helping to convey a large number of wounded men from places of danger. We were obliged to work at night, because the road was badly exposed in many places and the Red Cross emblem on our ambulances only served to excite the anger of the enemy, whose trenches, in places, were only a few hundred yards distant. By day, we obtained wonderful views of the bombardments, our point of observation being a rocky eminence immediately above Munster. From this same

An Exploding Shell

An Unfinished Sketch under Shell-fire

point we obtained a view of the Rhine and the distant hills of the Black Forest.

As time passed, we were treated to an increase of attention from the enemy batteries. Shells fell fairly close around us, and our ambulances were continually in danger. To add to many other physical discomforts, the weather was against us. Everything was dripping; the moss-covered ground was more than ankle-deep in water which flowed from the hill above us. The lack of sun and the depressing effect of dripping fir trees, the continual wearing of wet clothes, the want of sleep, the incessant artillery fire, and the sight of much suffering, all this in combination was not enough to dampen the gaiety of my comrades. Indeed, I noticed that as things grew worse, our friend Tommy Hudson sang the louder.

One very bad day, when things were really far from comfortable, Walter Buckmaster, most sympathetic of comrades, remarked: 'Tommy, if you ever put your spirits up to auction, I 'll be the last bidder.'

Within half a mile of our encampment, on the main road, a famous captain of the 'Blue Devil Corps' was mortally wounded by a shell. It was not considered advisable to move him, in view of his desperate condition. He was just able to utter one last order. It was immediately obeyed by the Brigade Clarion Band, which drew in a circle around him and, in the midst of the bombard-

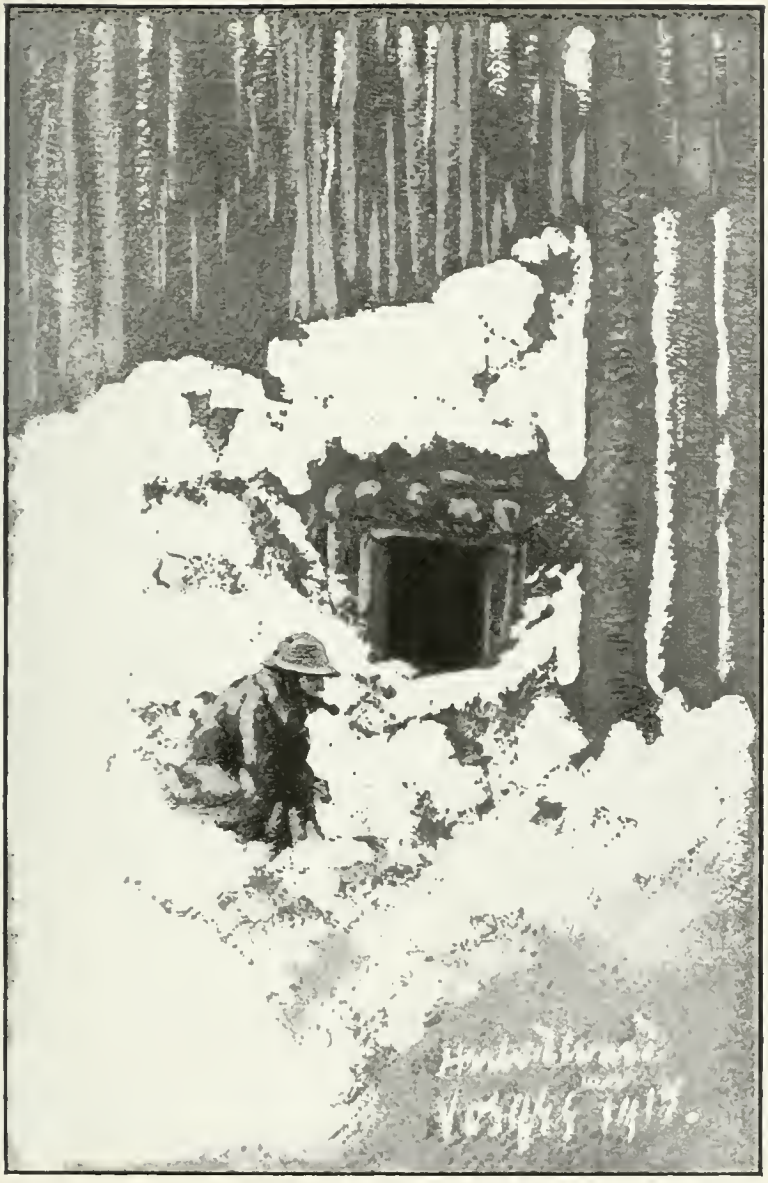
ment, played 'Sidi Brahim,' the French soldier's popular song. So, this gallant French officer bade farewell to his men!

Probably one of the most impressive sights to be seen among the mountain trenches is the special dug-out reserved for men who are too seriously injured to be moved. In company with the *Médecin Divisionaire*, Dr. Thooris, who was making his tour of inspection, I visited one of these refuges. The place was dark and unwholesome. At one end of the narrow aisle stood a red-hot stove, the object being to keep the place at a high temperature, so that those men who had been wounded in the lungs should have lighter air to breathe. There were twelve or fifteen men lying in two rows. With some, it was a question of hours; with others, a day or two at the most, before their sufferings were relieved by death. As I turned to go, a man lying near the entrance beckoned me with his finger. I went to his side and patted him gently on the shoulder. He was pallid and weak; unable to speak or even to move; but he gave me his message through the expression of his eyes. The unusual sight of a British uniform had attracted his attention, and awakened his desire to express what he felt towards my countrymen. He conveyed his dying greeting by a glance that penetrated my soul. Never have I been so much affected by the glance of a human being.

A Chasseur Alpin Muleteer

An '*Abri*'

An Underground Shelter for Seriously Wounded Men



A *Cagna*

A Dug-out in the Vosges Forest

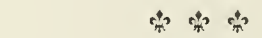
We were more than once only too glad to avail ourselves of the *cagnas*—those holes in the ground, dark, damp, and evil-smelling—for when shelter was needed from a crop of enemy shells, it was needed quickly. It sometimes happened that the badly-wounded men had to be carried on their stretchers to these dug-outs to save them from being blown to pieces where they lay at the *Poste de Secours*, near our tent. The actual conditions under these circumstances are difficult to imagine. Men with head wounds would throw themselves about with such violence that they became beyond control. The recollection of those dark wet holes in the midst of falling shells is as the haunting remembrance of an evil dream.

There is a deal of pathos surrounding the little drawing I made of a soldiers' cemetery in the pine-covered forest near the front. In a rough temporary shelter composed of planks lay a young French officer mortally wounded. True to the traditions of his race, he did not complain of pain. His face was flushed, and although his voice was weak he spoke clearly and with great enthusiasm.

'We have made such a pretty cemetery in the forest,' he said to me, waving his hand to indicate the direction; 'it is modest, of course, but so nicely arranged. When I get better I will go back at once and see it again, because

I want to be sure that the names on the crosses are well preserved.'

That same night he died, and was buried at dawn in the cemetery that he himself had helped to create and among the comrades he had loved.



Quite a series of incidents were connected with a dinner party given to Hargreaves and myself by French officers at Sulzern, the long straggling village which lies in the Munster valley (the German troops occupying the lower half), in that slice of German territory in Alsace, won and stoutly held by the French. We arrived in darkness to find that the place had been bombarded that afternoon, and a corner of the building in which we had been invited to dine had been carried away in the general destruction. There was much smoke, the smell of smouldering wood, and often the crashing of shells in the vicinity. Our French hosts apologised in graceful phrases for all shortcomings, saying, with a shrug of the shoulders :—

' What can you expect in war time ? '

The excellent dinner was prepared by an orderly, in civil life a chef of one of the most famous restaurants in Paris. The menu was the work of another artist-orderly, a well-known engraver ; it was headed with a photographic print, taken that same afternoon, of the burning house just across the road. There happened several

A Soldiers' Cemetery in the Forest—Vosges

incidents, any one of which, under ordinary circumstances, would have been considered more than sufficient to spoil a meal: the real sensation occurred near the end, when we were regaled with Kirsch of an unusually fine quality.

'Yes! It is certainly good,' said our host, lifting his glass to the candle-light, and eyeing the liqueur with the appreciative manner of a judge of good things.

'This afternoon we dug up no less than seven hundred bottles of this excellent stuff, just outside there, in the garden. We had been interested for some time past in the history of the wooden cross which used to stand in the middle of what was once a flower bed. It bore an inscription in German-French, "*Here lie the bodies of French soldiers.*"

'We have all had so many occasions to be suspicious of everything German, and—have we not had good reason? Here again, for instance! When we opened a grave we found—*Kirsch*!

'It is good, is it not? Let us now drink to our English friends and to Victory.'

The following day there was a continuation of the bombardment, and the building in which we had passed such a pleasant evening was shelled and blown to nothing.

Although German aeroplanes paid frequent visits to Gérardmer, dropping innumerable bombs, they accomplished no military damage. Upwards of one hundred persons had been killed, the great majority of them being women and children and non-combatants.

On one occasion a small farm was fired by a bomb and soon burnt out. The farm belonged to the widow of a cavalry soldier who had been killed in the war. The poor woman, in blind despair, rushed about her little fields, clasping to her bosom the only article she had managed to save : it was her dead husband's sabre !

Often enough, alas, attention is attracted by the neatly-constructed little wooden crosses that are erected in the trenches to mark the exact spot where a man has fallen ; but in one of the trenches was to be seen a boot—a highly-polished boot—projecting from the earth wall. The boot was in this highly-polished state because, as men passed the spot, they reverently wiped their sleeves over it as a last mark of respect. The soldier who owned it was killed by an exploding shell, and, with the exception of his foot, was covered by débris. It was not expedient at the time to disinter his body, and so his foot remained uncovered.

Sulzern—Midnight: October 1915

Rough wooden crosses are everywhere a sad feature in the scenery. They are constructed from the wooden planks of packing-cases. They are often crowned by the dead soldier's sodden and discoloured *kepi*, or his old water-bottle. Occasionally a remnant of his shot-riddled tunic is tied around it, as though to bestow a sense of personality. The dead soldier's name is generally written in pencil upon the rough surface of the plank, frequently followed by a few words exhorting the passer-by to halt a moment and to ask God's blessing upon the loyal soldier buried there, who gave his life to save his country from invasion. The writing is often difficult to read, owing to exposure to the weather, which is more than regrettable, in view of the visits of relatives after the war.

Lying scattered on these roughly-made graves, it is often easy to distinguish, even in spite of wind and rain, the withered handful of wildflowers gathered and placed there by a comrade as a last tribute.

There is the Cross, the living emblem of all we hold to be most noble and brave; the dainty white flowers typifying human sympathy and brotherhood; it is a worthy combination of all that is beautiful. What could be found more fitting to crown the grave of a fallen French soldier?

Considerable judgment and experience were required to organise the French Medical Service in the Vosges. It was a difficult task, first of all to initiate and then to keep in efficient working order a practical system of *Postes de Secours*, each with an adequate staff of surgeons and orderlies, in that perplexing mountainous region of Alsace. The chief difficulty lay in selecting sites near enough to the positions where engagements were frequent, and, at the same time, ensuring a means by which the wounded could be carried by *brancardiers* to points on the one and only practical route for motor ambulances. This difficult task was accomplished by Dr. Thooris, the *Médecin Divisionaire.* He was our superior officer, a military doctor of high rank, and an old campaigner. He bore his fifty odd years with remarkable ease, as I soon discovered on my first expedition with him. Subsequently, it was often my good fortune to be selected to accompany him upon his official visits to the outlying *Postes* in the mountains. It meant hard walking from an early hour in the morning until midnight or later.

In view of the uncertainty of the enemy's bombardment of our main line of communication over the pass, it was obviously necessary that we should become acquainted with the conditions of the country and roads, in order that we should be thoroughly familiar with all the methods and means of reaching the wounded, directly the main road sustained its inevitable destruction.

With this end in view I accompanied Dr. Thooris on several excursions, one of the most interesting being our

'. . . wooden crosses in the trenches to mark the spot where a man has fallen . . .'

visit to the Tête des Faux, opposite the historical Col du Bonhomme. It was a long hard climb to reach this romantic spot, crowned by a pile of enormous boulders which, at a distance, suggests the head of a Sphinx. We were on the summit of a mountain which has long borne the reputation, in local country tradition, of being the favoured ground of elves and fairies.

At the time of our visit, June 7, 1915, it was under the command of the intrepid Captain Latrabe of the Blue Devil Corps. Of all the first line trenches I had previously visited, this highly-elevated spot was destined for a certain reason to mark the most distinct epoch in my experience. Barely fifteen yards in front of us was the enemy. We even heard German voices in ordinary conversation, and we also heard their taunting insults. Not being familiar with the German language, I was unable to understand them. I was told, however, that they were saying rude and insulting things, and I quite believed it. Captain Latrabe suggested that we should descend among the rocks to obtain a view of the regimental mascot, a capercailzie hen sitting on her eggs, some twenty yards below the French trenches. He told us that his men had become passionately attached to the bird, and that they would insist upon risking their lives every night in carrying down food. In their simple way of estimating nature, they had grown to regard the incident as an omen; for they were mostly imaginative men, mountain dwellers, infinitely more interested, I noticed, in the fortunes of that bird with its eggs, calmly sitting

there under such strange conditions, than in their own welfare. They alluded to the scorn and indifference of the bird, and added :—

'Voilà ! Zut pour les boches.'

In passing along the trenches I was offered a periscope, but the moment the end of it appeared above the surface it was saluted by a perfect rain of rifle shots. Through a crevice of the rocks I obtained a glimpse of the maze of barbed wire which separated the enemy, and I saw several dead bodies dangling in its midst, out of reach. A young soldier offered me a German cap he had obtained the previous night at great personal risk. His action was followed by others, who produced quite a collection of battered German helmets and other odds and ends of souvenirs. Concealing a louis in the palm of my hand, I shook hands and thanked the young soldier. I felt the reproach keenly when he let the louis fall to the ground, and raised his hand to the salute.

On the northern slope of the hill, exposed to the enemy's fire, lay the bodies of some seven hundred unburied dead. The bodies had lain there since the heavy fighting which had taken place the previous Christmas—six months before ! There was no way of reaching this exposed slope, and consequently there the bodies were obliged to remain, uncovered and tainting the air. It was in returning from the summit of the Tête des Faux, late in the afternoon, close in front of the enemy's trenches, dodging behind rocks and tree stems, that I sustained an injury to my leg which rendered me entirely

In the Trenches at Tête des Faux . . . fifteen yards from the Enemy

Watching the Mascot (page 87)

helpless for some weeks, and which I fear will cripple me permanently. I was carried on a stretcher, under the care of Dr. Thooris and my comrade Debenham, in the dark for four hours, and eventually conveyed in one of our own ambulances to a military hospital at Gérardmer.

CHAPTER III

S. S. A.—CONVOY No. 3

(SECTION SANITAIRE ANGLAISE)

In most houses there is an odd room which becomes a haven for uneonsidered trifles and rubbish; so it was with the villa in whieh our convoy was billeted at Gérardmer. There was the attic, an unthought-of corner up among the rafters, which drew me to its bosom as it were by instinct, and at once I partook of its homely hospitality and shared the limited space with the water cistern and loose ends of things in mouldy boxes—all sorts of unsuspected remnants, from craeked mirrors and metal fittings to damaged dolls and broken blinds.

It was a prosaic enough attic when I arrived, but in a short time it assumed a new aspect: something in the way of a Cinderella-like transformation took place. The rough-hewn rafters were handy for pinning up sketches; the small portion of flat wall space was soon completely covered with gay and even saucy pictures from the French comic papers. A few yards of white calico cleverly concealed the unseemly heaps of rubbish and at the same time furnished a tempting surface for original decoration; indeed it was soon covered with naïve but

A Sketch near Luneville

ambitious subjects, bravely undertaken and highly-coloured. Good old Percy Tarbutt, who always persisted that Art was a mere matter of luck, gave frequent demonstrations in support of his theory. He had quite a passion for drawing ships, and a great trial they were to my sailor-nature. His real masterpiece was a female figure, drawn with a lump of coal; it eventually became the principal feature of a scene on Margate sands.

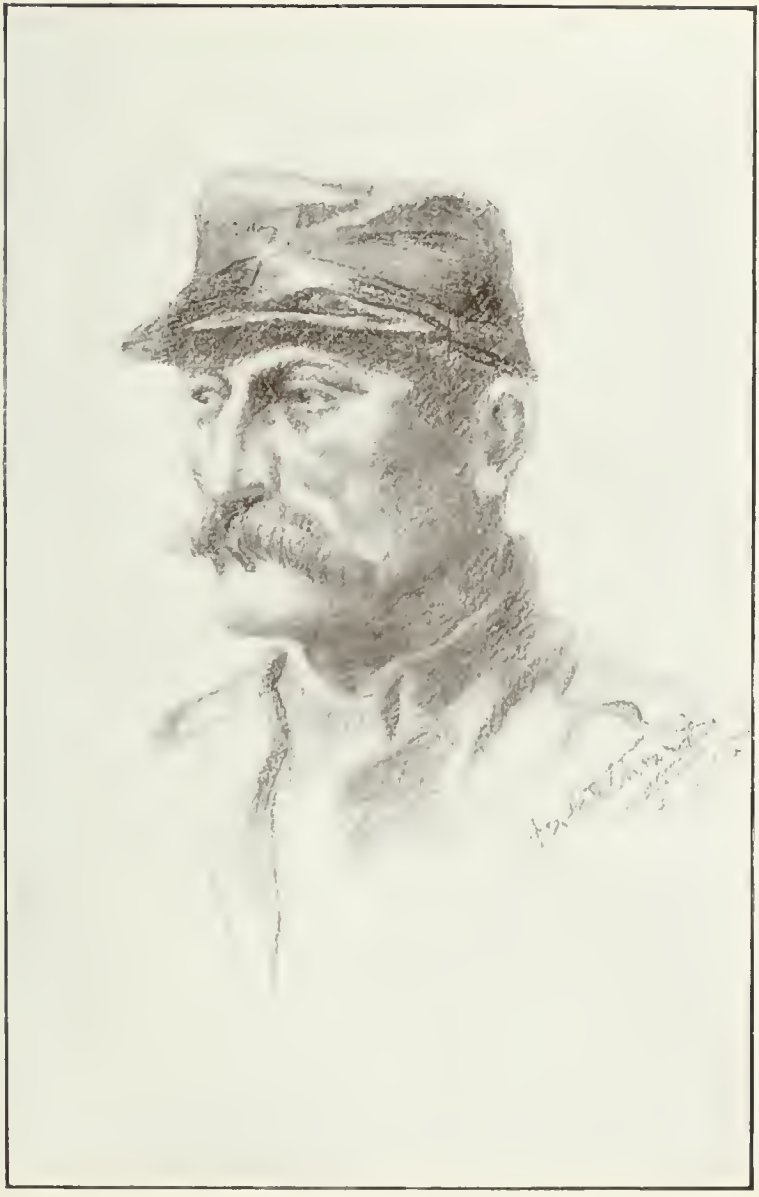
The small window, if it was unsatisfactory for purposes of light, at least proved useful for discharging cinders. The stove, an enforced purchase, owing to the cold weather, gave us a deal of trouble. It smoked, it emitted noxious gas and then—went out. On the day we bought the stove Tarbutt insisted upon buying a frying-pan. I solemnly told him that I thought we ought to go slowly, there was so little in the place to fry. But the purchase was not really wasted, for we divided it into two parts; the handle served as a poker, and the pan part was found useful as a mousetrap.

All hands were engaged in fairly continuous service, both by day and by night, and there was little time to spare. Sometimes, however, on occasions, my attic-studio-salon was crowded with men of various ranks. Many French officers, including our gallant friends—the *Médecin Divisionaire*, Dr. Thooris, Commandant Vézes, and Lieut. Giseard—would forgather and enjoy the spirit of Bohemianism which pervaded the place. Those of us who were present on those occasions will, I feel sure, always remember our little meetings with pleasure,

if only on account of the welcome break it made in the grim and painful experiences of everyday life. The man of all others who perhaps contributed most generously to the success of our impromptu gatherings was de Valerio, a famous French artist. He was a man of medium size, but he possessed the heart and the talent of many men rolled into one. The Aumonier, the French army chaplain, was another of our welcome visitors. He wore the Croix de Guerre on his breast; we all knew he had great courage and was well worthy of distinction.

When circumstances led me away from Gérardmer I found myself returning to the attic a second time to take a long last look. That little corner will always remain associated in my mind with much that was cheery, in the midst of much that was more than sad.

Admiral Lord Beresford, the Chairman of the British Ambulance Committee, visited us at Gérardmer, on his tour of inspection, and our Commandant Percy Tarbutt was good enough to send me with him on a visit to the famous ruined town of Guerbervilliers. After inspecting the wild ruin of the place, we visited the famous Sœur Julie, the Sister Superior who defied the German officers and bravely denounced them to their faces for their cruelty. She occupied the only house left intact by the ruthless Germans in their advance. I explained to Sœur



A French Soldier from the Jura

Julie that her visitor was a highly-distinguished British Admiral. She took his hand in both of hers and said :—

'So you are an Admiral, and have you been on the big sea? Yes? So you have been in strange far-away countries then?'

Still holding and shaking his hand in both of hers, she led us into a bare little room. Sœur Julie and the Admiral seated themselves face to face in front of the window; it was late in the afternoon, and as the light was fading I could only distinguish the silhouettes of their two faces: the nun with her large white coif and the Admiral's clear-cut features. Both faces were remarkable in character. After a few minutes' general conversation, Sœur Julie commenced to tell us her tale of horror: of what she had witnessed. It was strange indeed to hear such peculiarly ghastly details of murder and of rape from the lips of a nun. The story is well known, and it is unnecessary to recapitulate the list of hideous cruelties enacted by the enemy, when they eventually entered the town.

At the conclusion of our visit, on the threshold of her house, the Admiral bowed and gallantly kissed her hand, whilst she, at the same time, patted him affectionately on the shoulder. Behind them, the wall was deeply pitted with bullet holes; it was, in fact, the wall against which so many helpless men had been brutally shot.

The following day it was my good fortune to accompany Lord Beresford to a review of a portion of one of the Brigades of the 'Blue Devil Corps.' He met with

a most cordial reception: his handsome face commanded expressions of admiration on all sides. After inspecting the lines of troops, accompanied by the Colonel in command, he stood facing them, whilst the Clarion Band of the Chasseurs Alpins not only played but actually sang 'God Save the King' in English! Then with their characteristic flourish of bugles they broke into the 'Marseillaise.'

In the silence that followed, the Admiral, in token of his admiration of the fitness and renowned valour of the troops, said :—

'Well men! after inspecting you, all I can say is, *Pauvres boches.*'

He could not possibly have paid them a brighter compliment. His words were instantly understood, and they appealed to the Gallic temperament.

The Admiral, who occupied the best bedroom in our villa by the lake, departed that same evening to visit a neighbouring convoy. The following morning at about four o'clock an enemy aeroplane dropped several bombs in our vicinity. One of them fell within thirteen yards of the front of the house, and another within a few yards of the kitchen. We were thrown from our beds, but sustained no harm. I heard subsequently that when the Admiral was told by telephone about the bombs falling so close to the quarters he had just vacated, and that

'Sniper's Corner'

An Exposed Portion of our Main Road to Wettstein

his bed had actually been smothered with stones and broken glass, his first impulse was to send a telegram to the Kaiser saying, 'Bad shot, Bill.'

In honour of the occasion of the King's birthday last year, we made an effort to entertain our French comrades. The General of the Division was one of the first guests to arrive. His visit was the greater compliment to us, for it was seen that he was still suffering from deep emotion. He had lost two sons, killed in the war, the second one falling only a few days before. Frank Hargreaves, who had succeeded Percy Tarbutt, made a suitable speech, and the General's sympathetic reply was received with great enthusiasm. It was an unusual gathering, an interlude in the great struggle that was taking place a few miles away.

Of all our many French friends at Gérardmer, no one was more heartily welcomed to our quarters than 'The Man with the Dog.' He was a man past middle age, clad as a *brancardier*, and was accompanied at all times by his faithful dog. Of distinguished appearance, with charming manners, he spent his time among the mountain trenches where, with the aid of his dog, he searched for wounded in exposed and out-of-the-way places. His only

son had been killed in the war. He was broken with grief, and sought relief in saving the lives of others.

Possessing large properties, in the centre of France I believe, he was generally known among the soldiers in the trenches as 'The good millionaire.' We never knew his name. He spoke perfect English, and seemed to take pleasure in his conversations with us. Careless of his life, his brave heart led him into taking undue risks. We were, all of us, keenly touched when we received news of his death. The good man was shot through the head, and from that moment his beautiful dog was never seen again.

⚜ ⚜ ⚜

One day we received an order to send an ambulance in haste to bring in a wounded officer. It transpired that he was a cavalry officer; before being placed in the ambulance he insisted upon patting his horse, to whom he was much attached. When the motor ambulance started away, the horse pawed the ground and whinnied; then he broke loose from his attendant and started to gallop after his master.

⚜ ⚜ ⚜

Whilst Tarbutt and I were floundering about in the mud one dark night, helping the loading of our ambulances, we kicked against a soldier's pocket-book. It was a leather *portefeuille*, that most cherished of all a

A Type of French Soldier: a Veteran

soldier's possessions. We took it into a dug-out, and by the light of a few matches we searched for the man's name. As we turned over the papers, we were impressed by a battered photograph representing a sweet-faced woman with a baby in her arms.

The following day we made every effort to restore the book to its owner, knowing well how much it meant to some poor chap. We hoped to find the owner among the wounded we had brought in the previous night, and visited the various *Postes* and hospitals; but we met with no success. Then, by chance, we spoke to a passing surgeon, who replied :—

'How strange. Why, I have the man in my care, a bad case. I remember his name—Colerier, because it reminded me of cholera.'

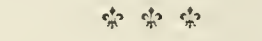
There was an expression of pure joy on the man's poor face as he said : '*Merci, mon lieutenant, merci*,' when the cherished book was laid on his pillow.

We were often thanked by the simple graceful word *Merci*, when we transported a wounded man into the hospital. I remember one man, however, who showed signs of anger, and, in his peasant *patois*, he roundly abused everything he could think of, from the Government downwards. We delivered him over to the medical authorities, and the next day I visited him, being

interested to know the reason of his outburst of temper. I found him still spluttering and saying :—

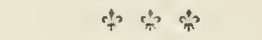
'This is the fourth time I have been knocked out, and I expect I shall be hanging about down here in the midst of all these people in painter's blouses for at least a month.'

He added a few other expressions, which it is not necessary to translate, but I thoroughly admired his spirit. This was by no means an isolated case of men grumbling at being brought to the hospital. Their hearts were in the trenches, with their comrades, and even when wounded they often resented being taken away from them.



The wounded always showed a sublime endurance of pain, and they were incredibly patient. Courage, shown by wounded French soldiers, seems to have something almost supernatural about it. On every side where we met with wounded men, there was always an expression of gladness at seeing us and a ready eagerness to shake hands, if their wounds permitted, but seldom a word.

In our No. 3 Section, during the time I served with it, we carried upwards of twenty-eight thousand wounded men, and each of these men, without exception, behaved with amazing courage. It would be difficult, I think, to pay any higher tribute to the fortitude of Mr. Poilu.



A '*Fantassin*' (Infantry)

It is highly gratifying to realise the large number of valuable lives that have been saved owing to the organisation of the British Ambulance Committee. Under the energetic management of Mr. Bradby Peyman and Mrs. Baker, and supported by voluntary gifts, the system of British Ambulance Convoys, without mentioning the equally good efforts of the American Ambulance Corps and others, has been of incalculable benefit to suffering humanity. The great work has been conducted by volunteer officers—men of different ages and degrees, and of various professions.

The British Convoy No. 3, to which I was attached, stationed last year at Gérardmer, was most ably captained by Percy Tarbutt. He was subsequently succeeded by Frank Hargreaves, who also proved himself to be a highly popular leader. We were a party of perhaps twenty volunteers, and I can never forget the unfailing kindness and spirit of loyal devotion of my comrades. At any hour of the day or night they were ever ready to go in search of wounded.

Our work was principally at night, because a considerable portion of our road was exposed to the view of the enemy. Our route followed a long line of communication over the high summits of the Vosges into the conquered territory in Alsace. Although we were continually in the midst of shell and rifle fire, our casualties were surprisingly small. There are, in that far-off corner of France, however, some British graves which contain the remains of our comrades who fell, dying in a noble

cause. There are also several men who sustained injuries and wounds. Their scars will always remind them of their worthy mission.

We were invariably treated with the utmost kindness by the French whom we had come to assist. From the General to the simple peasant soldier, every one greeted us as friends. On our side, we all of us felt that we were privileged in being allowed to join them, and were grateful to the French for permitting us to witness their splendid qualities: to carry the body of a wounded soldier was regarded by us as an honour.

Anxious to convey our sentiments to our French soldier friends, we conceived the idea of composing a little monthly journal. The first number, laboriously written in long hand, contained an open letter to the French. It was very gratifying to us to see the open letter reprinted in that most famous of all trench journals, *Le Diable au Cor*, printed and published at the front, not far from Gérardmer, by the 3rd Brigade of the Chasseurs Alpins, October 10, 1915. The letter is as follows :—

Aux Français

Salut, nos frères français ! Et dans ce salut nous mettons tout notre respect, tout notre cœur. Sachez que, lorsque l'idée nous vint de rédiger ce petit journal, nous y vîmes une heureuse occasion de communiquer avec vous, de vous dire ce que nous sentons, de vous faire comprendre ce que notre différence de langue nous a empêché de vous exprimer jusqu'ici : combien

'Our work . . . at night . . . under shell and rifle fire'

nous vous aimons, combien nous vous admirons, que notre vie toute entière est à votre service, animés du seul désir de vous être un peu utiles.

Vous connaissez la villa où votre générosité nous hospitalise. C'est là, le soir, après le dîner, dans la lumière et le confort, qu'une trentaine de vos amis anglais attendent de pouvoir monter à votre secours. Ils chantent de vieux airs du pays ; ils se racontent des nouvelles de leur Patrie, quand, soudain le ronflement du moteur vient dominer la musique et les voix. C'est l'ordre du départ, et, quelques instants plus tard, la salle est vide, silencieuse ; seule, y flotte encore la fumée des cigares, et les journaux traînent sur la table. Nous sommes sur la route . . . nous montons à W . . . sans bruit, sans lumières, et nous nous retrouvons dans la nuit, dans le froid ou la gelée.

Vous, vous êtes tous les mêmes, pas une plainte, pas un cri, et devant la façon héroïque dont vous supportez les pires douleurs, nous voudrions nous exclamer, vous dire notre admiration, mais votre courage est si spontané, si naturel, que nous restons muets : du reste, vous ne nous comprendriez pas, alors . . . alors nous nous bornons à vous prendre aussi doucement que possible et à vous emmener bien vite vers le calme et les soins, nous ingéniant à éviter les trous de la route, les secousses et les heurts dont nous souffrons tant à la pensée que vous les subissez. Et quel bonheur de vous savoir quelques heures plus tard installés dans un de ces confortables hôtels où

nous vous avons distribués, où l'on va guérir votre mal.

Le lendemain, pour nous rappeler encore votre glorieux souvenir, quand le soleil nous réveille, il vient frapper sur nos brancards le sang que vous avez perdu ; il le fait rougeoyer, briller, étinceler, et ces sanglants rayons sont ceux de la Victoire dont vous payez si généreusement, si vaillamment le prix.

Merci pour Elle, amis Français, Merci. . . .

Under Shell-fire

CHAPTER IV

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

During three weeks I lay in a military hospital scarcely able to move, with my right leg enveloped in a plaster-of-Paris mould. This incident at least afforded me an opportunity to realise the difference between merely visiting a hospital and being a patient. It gave me also cause to be deeply grateful to Dr. Fournial for his skilful treatment, and also to Mademoiselle Jeanne de Johannis for her extreme kindness in looking after me. Here was an opportunity, moreover, for observing the extraordinary devotion and the loving care bestowed upon the wounded men. I saw that the *personnel* of the hospital never rested. There was continual movement day and night; wounded men were brought in at all hours. Operations were performed continuously. The latter fact was brought home to me because the operating-room was just below where I lay, and I was, at all times, conscious of what was taking place. One night there was more noise than usual, and I was surprised to hear an angry gruff voice raised in protest. Shortly afterwards the nurse came to me, and said in somewhat discouraged tones :—

'Oh, this war, it makes brutes of men. Just now I

wanted to wash the hands of a man who had to be operated upon; he refused and became violently angry. He said, "No, my hands are covered with the blood of a boche Colonel. I killed him myself, and I refuse to have the blood washed away." '

Very early one morning I was startled by hearing a baby crying. I had become accustomed to almost every other sound, but this was unusual and at once excited my curiosity. I recognised the voice of Mademoiselle de Johannis saying to a woman :—

'You are here already? I did not expect you so soon, you did not waste any time.' Then I heard a peasant woman's reply :—

'Oh no, madame—see—I still wear my apron. When they gave me your telegram to say that my man was wounded, I took up my baby and came at once. I have been twelve hours in the train, and I have never travelled anywhere before.'

She was taken to her husband, who lay in the next room to mine, in a very grave condition, his lungs perforated by shrapnel. Even now I still recall the sounds in that next room, only divided from mine by a shallow partition : I hear the baby's plaintive cry, the woman's sobs, the man's desperate struggle to breathe.

Wounded !

From my bed I was able to see out of a window. The main road passed directly in front of the hospital, and on the opposite side were a few pine trees, which served as cover against aeroplane raids for a group of artillery ammunition wagons. At intervals, artillery drivers would hitch up their horses to one of the wagons and gallop away with it in a cloud of dust. The next incident would be the arrival of one of our motor ambulances, bringing in the wounded from the front, and I could see poor mangled bodies, swathed in bandages, being carried in on stretchers.

But I was most attracted, I think, by the figure of an old grey-haired lady, who arrived each morning at dawn carrying an old blue umbrella. She stood through the whole of each day awaiting the arrival of the wounded, and as each man was drawn from the ambulance she manœuvred her umbrella in such a way as to shield his eyes from the glare of the sun. She rendered a great service; a simple kindly act of true devotion. *She understood.*

Among a fresh consignment of wounded arriving one morning was a young sergeant who, in civil life, was a Paris lawyer. He was a particularly handsome young fellow, and in spite of a serious wound in the head he impressed every one by his attractive manners. Upon recovering consciousness from a serious operation, he implored the surgeon to telegraph to his mother and sister to come to him, and showed great anxiety for their arrival. Continually he asked if any reply had been received. In a few days paralysis deprived him of the power of speech. He then used a pencil, and wrote on scraps of paper, asking for news. By degrees he became entirely paralysed and unable to move. Still he indicated his eagerness by gazing fixedly at the door through which he hoped his mother and sister would come; and it was in this position, a few days later, that he died. His mother and sister never came; they were prisoners in invaded territory!

A man straggled into the hospital one day, saying that he had walked in order to leave room in the ambulance for those more seriously hurt. He said his wound was really nothing; he had been shot in the head! When his turn came to be examined, he climbed unaided on to the operating table, but the moment he lowered his head and lay in a horizontal position, he died. The bullet had entered his brain, and the change in position

After an Explosion

brought on hæmorrhage. One of a hundred incidents showing the spirit of the French soldier.

Upon another occasion a mere lad was brought to the hospital, complaining of a violent headache. It was a busy time just then, and his case was not considered serious; particularly as he explained that the pain was caused by a knapsack falling on his head in the trenches. When his turn came, and he was examined under the X-rays, they found a bullet embedded in the very centre of his brain.

Considering the enormous strain of living for months at a time under continuous shell fire in the trenches, it is remarkable that there were so few cases of men losing their reason. I only heard of two or three mental cases among the many thousands of wounded men who were carried by our ambulances. One of the cases was that of a brave Poilu who had passed through a fierce hand-to-hand fight, and it was said that he had acquitted himself in a very remarkable manner. Exactly how and when he lost his reason will never be known, but the memory and the effect of his effort remained with him. He always imagined himself to be in the thick of a fight, and was for ever jerking his arms, the gesture of a man trying to free his bayonet after use.

Onee I spoke with a man supposed to have made a remarkable recovery. He told me that a strange thing had oecurred to him. He was wounded in a charge, and fell in front of the enemy's trenches. Whilst lying helpless on the ground, with stiffening limbs, he suffered intensely from thirst. Seeing his sergeant coming towards him, he asked for a drink of water, and then went to sleep feeling greatly refreshed. The following day the same thing occurred. When he was eventually rescued, he discovered that it had all been a dream. During the two days and nights that he had lain on the ground in front of the enemy, no one had been near him!

It occurred to me that the hospital in whieh I lay would serve as a valuable object lesson from the point of view of what ean be accomplished by a handful of efficient and loyal people. There were sometimes upwards of eighty patients, many of them requiring great care and attention. The staff of this hospital consisted of Dr. Fournial, *Médecin Chef*, and an aide; one nurse, Mademoiselle Jeanne de Johannis, who was on duty night and day, and had, in fact, worked on this system since the outbreak of the war; and four orderlies, one of whom in civil life was a priest. The entire kitchen arrangements were conducted by one man, a worthy character to whom

'No Man's Land'—Wettstein: October 1915

Winter

I would also like to pay a passing tribute. In civil life he followed the profession of a 'sword swallower' in a travelling circus.

Late one night, about midnight, Mademoiselle de Johannis came and asked me to lend her my electric torch. An hour or two later when she returned it, she said that she had been with her sister, the chief nurse of the Casino hospital, to gather some wildflowers to place on the bodies of men who had recently died, and who were to be buried the following morning at dawn. Surely a beautiful picture. I imagined I could see the two white-clad figures of those noble sisters stumbling about the hillside, seeking wildflowers; the sweetest imaginable symbol of true sympathy. The little drawing on page 137 was made as I lay in bed, after she left my room.

Though my stay of three weeks in that hospital was somewhat marred by the physical discomfort of my injury, the opportunity I had of observing such true devotion and efficiency more than compensated me.

When my kind friend, Paul Gérard, came to convey me in his car to Paris, for a medical consultation, I felt keen regret at leaving the companionship of such noble people.

'. . . the two white-clad figures . . .' (page 135)

CHAPTER V

THE WOMEN OF FRANCE

If it be accepted as a truth that the home makes the country, necessarily it must be allowed that the mother makes the home. Therefore it follows that the greatness of a nation is not to be measured by either wealth or commerce, but by the character of its women.

The French woman is famed all over the world for her efficiency, and since the outbreak of war her reputation has been more than justified. Her charm and grace, her remarkable quality of *understanding* distinguish her from the women of any other country. Children, as they grow up, regard their mother as their best companion and friend; they tell her everything naturally and without concealment. The father enjoys his home, because his wife is his best friend. The influence of the French mother is beyond words. She is a wonder.

At the outbreak of war I witnessed many different aspects of the mobilisation of troops, and I was struck by the stoicism of the mothers and wives of the soldiers. Many of them wept, but they gave up their men bravely. Immediately afterwards, they nerved themselves to face the situation, finding fresh courage even in the very

weakness of their womanhood. They seized every opportunity offered in the sweet work of doing good. Not only did they work by organising their qualities of mercy, but they faced gladly the sacrifice of overwork and overstrain, leading in many cases to the loss of health and life itself.

It is not my wish to indulge in platitudes or in generalities. It is more in accord with my temperament to relate the incidents as they came within my experience, and to let others form their judgment of the moral.

A friend of mine who had some official connection with the case, related to me the story of a poor girl who had been found dead in her room. The official inquiry recorded that the girl was formerly a seamstress, engaged in a large dressmaking establishment in Paris. She had saved the sum of £10 from her earnings and, anxious to provide warm garments for the soldiers in their winter trenches, she spent the entire amount in purchasing wool. In her spare moments, after her hard day's work was done, she worked diligently with her knitting needles. Through lack of patronage, the dressmaking establishment was forced to discharge its workpeople, and this poor girl found herself penniless and without employment. Still she continued working for the soldiers, and deprived herself even of the necessities of life : she became ill and died. They found her in her poor room, dead in her chair,

A French *Réserviste*

the knitting needles still in her hands. That is the type of French woman who is indeed worthy to be the sister of a French soldier.

At Gérardmer last year I met with an incident which gives colour to my previous statement relating to the French woman's instinct and quick understanding. A case occurred when it was urgent that an operation should be performed immediately, but owing to unforeseen circumstances, it was found impossible at that moment to obtain any kind of anæsthetic. The surgeon was much distressed, for the operation was a grave one. The only hospital nurse in the place took in the situation at a glance. Leaning forward, she gently kissed the wounded man and placed her cheek caressingly against his, with her arm round his head. The face of this poor brave man lit up at once with a gratified smile, he *understood* and submitted to the operation with remarkable fortitude.

I once overheard a conversation between two soldiers in the trenches. One of them had received a letter from home, and he quoted certain passages, to the effect that an officer had come to the house of one of his neighbours to bear the news of a son's death. In an effort to calm the poor mother's emotion, the officer told her that she should always remember that her son had died in helping to save France.

'Ah,' she replied, 'only tell me, Monsieur l'Officier, that we shall save France, and I will cry no more.'

A French Soldier Type

T

Instances of charity and self-sacrifice among the French poor are so numerous and of such common daily occurrence as to become mere incidents in ordinary life. I have seen a poor old woman distribute her entire stock of fruit from her barrow among a company of soldiers who were marching to the front. I know of a charwoman who contributed £100, the savings of seventeen years of hard work, in one gift to an ambulance fund.

An old couple, living in great poverty, invited an officer's widow to come and bring her four children to live with them.

'We can manage,' said the old lady, 'we are so fond of children, and if you will join us with your family, we will economise. It is so easy—for instance—my good man now smokes four pipes of tobacco a day; if you will come to us, in future he will only smoke once a day.'

There are two great and good qualities, among many others, for which the French are particularly distinguished: self-denial and economy. Throughout France, we meet with these characteristics. The French are in no way prompted by miserly instinct to deny themselves and to save their money: they do not labour long hours and practise thrift and economy for any unworthy love of hoarding money. The great and sacred object of their efforts is to keep in view the welfare of their children. French parents are passionately devoted to their children. In fact, the catastrophe of the declining birth-rate is in close connection with this popular ambition to benefit their children. According to the Civil Code of France, the testamentary distribution of property is legally confined within the family; this produces the natural reasoned result that the fewer the children, the greater is each share.

Reconnoitring, behind a Snow Bank

Whenever I felt unduly depressed, when the memories of things, seen and felt, weighed heavily upon my mind, I always found comfort in visiting Sœur Claire, the Sister Superior of the Orphelinat at Gérardmer. I was drawn to her not by religious ties, but in the cause of pure humanity. She would receive me in her bare little reception room, always with a smile.

She was an old lady approaching eighty years of age. Her lower limbs were paralysed and her hands were sadly misshapen by rheumatism. With a charming simplicity, she would speak of people's kindness to her in her life's work. To her sweet mind the world appeared peopled only by gentle-hearted men and women. If by chance, hearing a heavier cannonade than usual, we were drawn to speak of the Germans, she used to close her lips firmly and shake her head in pity. Her face was unusually beautiful in its expression; each line and curve bore the trace of a life devoted to kindly thought of others.

Once, encouraged by her sympathy, I ventured to show her the photographs of my family—she pressed each photograph to her lips and asked me to leave them with her just for the night, without explaining the reason. The following day, when she returned them to me, she kissed me on both cheeks, and said: 'We have asked God to protect your two soldier sons.'

At early dawn each morning there occurred the sad function of burying the bodies of soldiers who had died in the various improvised hospitals during the night. There was even more than the sad ceremony itself, because one's heart was touched in a double sensc : there was the natural reverence for the brave dead, and there were the sympathy and remembrance one felt for the families who were all unconscious at that moment of their dear one's fate. Knowing something of French home life, I found my imagination passing beyond control in forming vivid pictures of what was passing at that moment in far-off homes, among widows and orphans, who were yet to learn the tragic news of their bereavement.

Following the procession of stretcher - bearers with their sad burdens, there was yet another heart wrench—twenty or thirty little girls, dressed uniformly in black hats and capes. They were the lonely parentless girls from Sœur Claire's Orphanage.

' What can be more fitting,' Sœur Claire said to me, ' than for these children who are already parentless, to stand proxy for those men's children, and to represent them at their father's graveside ? '

Upon one occasion only was their absence remarked. It was bitterly cold that morning, and the ground was sodden by several days' incessant rain. The poor children's boots were thoroughly worn out and Sœur Claire was fearful lest they might suffer from exposure !

The Orphanage is very poor, so poor that the Mayor of Gérardmer, from his scanty resources, has made them

Mud !

The Grave of a French Soldier

a grant of one penny a day for each of the sixty children.

They live within the never-ending sound of artillery fire; each morning is devoted to attendance at the burial service for the dead. Their days are spent in strict seclusion, and their nights are passed in natural terror of bombs being dropped from enemy aeroplanes.

Poor little children! Their normal childhood joys are thus suddenly turned into the tragic realities of life, and not only are they deprived of childish freedom and liberty of action, but their poor little souls are for ever clouded by what they witness daily, of the arrival and suffering of wounded men directly from the front, and of the interment of fallen soldiers. Their youthful minds are tortured with the knowledge that all around them is one great continuous effort, to the abandonment of all else—the struggle to save France from cruel invasion.

The kindly faces of the Sisters and the gentle, if subdued, faces of those poor little children tell their story. Whatever their physical privations, they are, in the highest sense of the word, sublimely happy.

Everywhere there are daily proofs that the spirit of Jeanne d'Arc still flourishes in the hearts of the women of France. Those brave hearts, bearing the racking strain of anxiety, are in every way as brave and as staunch as

those of their bravest men. Instances of self-sacrifice, of silent heroism and courage abound on every side.

Truly, in war time, it is the woman who bears the hardest portion.

This spirit of woman's bravery is well indicated by an incident at the railway station of Dijon, in November of last year.

Crowds of relatives had gathered to await the arrival of a hospital train, coming from the front. When all the wounded were withdrawn from the train, mostly on stretchers, a young woman carrying a baby came forward to inquire for her husband. She was informed, with every mark of sympathetic respect, that her husband had died of his wounds the previous night.

The young woman, at first stunned with grief, quickly recovered herself, and raising her baby above the heads of those who came forward to condole with her, she cried, in a faltering voice :—

'*Vive la France!*'

Printed in Great Britain by T. and A. Constable, Printers to His Majesty
at the Edinburgh University Press

64/G
W29

University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
305 De Neve Drive - Parking Lot 17 • Box 951388
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90095-1388
Return this material to the library from which it was borrowed.

Series 9482

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
D 000 815 396 7